

NEWS

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GLICKMAN SETS CLEAR PRIORITIES IN FY 1999 BUDGET

WASHINGTON, Feb. 2, 1998 -- Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman today released the Administration's proposed fiscal year 1999 budget for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The \$54.3 billion spending plan reflects President Clinton's commitment to balancing the budget and streamlining government, while continuing to provide better services to farmers and low income Americans.

"This spending plan allows us to continue our efforts to ensure a safe food supply, combat hunger in America, protect our natural resources, strengthen the safety net for farmers, and provide economic opportunities for rural Americans," Glickman said. "This budget has all the right stuff and we will work hard to get it passed."

From initiatives to bring safe drinking water and the prospect of home ownership to millions of rural Americans to a far-reaching food safety initiative, the plan is a commitment to meet the most pressing needs of USDA's customers.

The proposed budget continues to reflect the success of the Administration's move toward more efficient government. It is 14 percent lower than the Department's 1993 budget of \$63.1 billion, a result of USDA's success in streamlining its operations, cutting its workforce by 20,000 FTEs through 1997, the strong economy, and USDA program reforms.

Highlights of the FY99 budget proposal include:

- Building upon the President's Interagency Food Safety Initiative with \$46 million in additional funding. The proposal includes \$11 million for the Food Safety and Inspection Service to continue to implement USDA's new state-of-the-art meat and poultry inspection system (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points system or HACCP), expand consumer education, and work with farms on voluntary measures to reduce contamination. Also included is an additional \$28 million for research and education efforts and an additional \$6.3 million to broaden the scope of the Pesticide Data Program for microbiological testing of fruits and vegetables.

- Almost double the amount of direct farm ownership loans -- with 18 percent of the loans targeted to socially disadvantaged farmers.

- Full funding of the crop insurance program.

- Nearly \$6.4 billion for the Department's international programs and activities, including \$4.6 billion for the Commodity Credit Corporation export credit guarantee programs.

- A proposal to restore food stamp benefits to legal immigrant families with either children, elderly, or disabled persons -- an estimated 730,000 additional recipients, at a cost of \$535 million.

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- An increase of \$149 million for WIC, the special supplemental nutrition program for Women, Infants, and Children, for a total program level of \$4.16 billion. This total amount will provide nutritional assistance for an estimated 7.5 million eligible women, infants, and children.

- A major commitment to food recovery and gleaning -- \$20 million for a new community-based grant program to help make sure food that might otherwise go to waste instead helps meet the needs of those Americans still fighting hunger.

- An increase of about \$150 million for a total of \$250 million to carry out the recommendations of the USDA Civil Rights Action Team report.

- An increase of more than \$450 million -- for a total of \$10.4 billion -- for rural development direct loans, loan guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.

- Nearly \$2 million to continue to put in place the recommendations of the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Agricultural Concentration, including increased monitoring and enforcement of antitrust and regulatory policies.

- An increase of \$37 million for the Natural Resources Conservation Service in its \$1.3 billion budget, a plan that continues to support locally led conservation efforts. That includes a \$20 million bonus fund that will be an incentive to encourage states to achieve higher levels of non-federal contributions toward conservation efforts.

- The NRCS budget also includes an increase of \$100 million -- to \$300 million -- for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

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